

**March 11, 2015**  
**Tenmile South Helena Forest Restoration Collaborative Committee**  
**Meeting 5**

**Attending -**

Collaborative Members: Mike Bishop, Angie Grove, Jordan Alexander, Doug Powell, Joe Cohenour, Gary Marks, Leonard Wortman, Brad Langsather (for Ron Alles)

Resources: Marshall Thompson (Forest Service), Denise Pengeroth (Forest Service wildlife biologist), Brent Costain (Forest Service wildlife biologist), John George (NRCS)

Public guests: Morgan Darlington (Daines' office), Stan Frasier, Diane Tipton

Media: Tom Kuglin (Helena IR)

**Notes – Next Meeting is April 8, 2015\* beginning at 1:30, City-County Building Room 426**

\*Due to conflicts for more than one member of the collaborative, the meeting will be April 8<sup>th</sup> instead of April 15<sup>th</sup>.

***Collaborative Structure Discussion:***

Joe, Mike & Jordan all expressed interest in leadership roles for the collaborative.

Consensus: Votes were counted, Joe will be chair, Mike & Jordan will be vice co-chairs. This information is now posted on the Tenmile Watershed Projects webpage: <http://www.helenamt.gov/tmcwp/tenmile-collaborative-contacts.html>.

***Wildlife Biologist Presentation*** (Handout attached):

Questions:

Wolverine – how sensitive are they to proposed changes/projects?

The US Fish/Wildlife Service (FWS) recently proposed but withdrew the proposal to list wolverines as a threatened or endangered species due to the impacts on the populations due to climate change. There is expectation of very little impact to wolverines in this proposal because the projects will not impact snow persistence, particularly at high altitudes. The US Forest Service (FS) will review potential impacts on wolverines in the Red Mountain area, one of the only high altitude natal areas in the project scope.

What was the process to rank impacted species?

The FS looked at potential changes in habitat based on projects proposed, species in abundance, and which species look like they may be affected. They didn't use clear quantitative measures, but more of an analysis based on what we expect to see in the near future.

Can a wildlife species layer be added to the project maps?

Yes. Maps and data will be requested from other agencies working in this region. Contact information will be shared with FS wildlife staff. Maps will also show the changes to habitat and potential changes to species based on projects being proposed in different units and areas.

Do we need better mapping tools to identify riparian areas, even the smallest key pockets?

Yes. Marshall will bring that back to the FS for a recommendation/request. They will contact the EPA group working in the area to get those layers/mapping options. (Dick Sloan, Tillman McAdams)

What about maintaining project units after the work is done?

There is concern about regrowth without age diversity of trees. "We wouldn't want to see acres & acres of small trees growing closely together allowing little room for anything but very small critters." The proposal map shows burning in large areas, but units will be broken out and burned separately over many years of the project. Because of the timeframe for projects and the fact that they are looking at small numbers of units being addressed, age diversity is not an issue.

How do we time burning and treatment with preserving the regrowth, regeneration in the forest?

As mentioned before, this is a multi-year plan. Some areas will be treated prior to major regrowth in grey forests, some will be treated after some regrowth has already occurred, which typically encourages healthier and more robust regrowth.

Was there consensus about not doing any work in roadless areas?

Not as a blanket agreement. The group agreed with the need to be respectful of the roadless areas, but also to be aware of what was agreed among the previous collaborative group. People generally agreed to avoid mechanical treatment in those areas, not to completely leave the areas without any treatment.

Should moose be higher in the priority list?

Denise will review that concern and appreciated the comments regarding moose habitat and population. Brent is concerned about protecting the riparian, wet areas, which is typically moose habitat. The projects propose buffers around the riparian areas.

What prescriptions do you recommend for premier lynx habitat?

Science is evolving in terms of best lynx habitat. It seems the denser areas that are about 15-40 years in recovering clear cut areas are good habitat, as are multi-layered forests.

How are elk being affected by the deadfall? Are they changing their patterns of travel?

Elk sometimes divert around the deadfall, but some have created narrow, hidden paths through it. A study is going on now, which will be tracking elk for the next 4 years. Joe will share the article on this from Tom Kuglin.

**Public Comment:** When planning, please consider coyote, mountain lions & black bear. There is concern that if the species are displaced, we may create a problem where one didn't exist before.

*Forest Service Project Plans, map update, timeline, public comment categories, expectations for collaborative comments:*

FS will have a proposal called Alt 3, or Alternative 3. Alt 3 takes the original project and includes/adjusts alternative approaches based on public comments & recommendations. Alt 1 is the "do nothing" alternative. Alt 2 is the original plan created for the project. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be released in early May, showing impacts from all three alternatives. Either the FS will either create an Alternative 4, or choose one of the three alternatives. A new map will be available by the end of March. FS will have an open time at the end of the month for the public to ask questions and review the new map and alternatives. Divide, Telegraph, & Tenmile South Travel Plan DEIS' will be released for public comment about 2 weeks apart, beginning in the end of March.

**FS is looking at the current collaborative to discuss and address new recommendations & support for previous recommendations from the first collaborative.**

**It would be great to have collaborative consensus comments and recommendations prior to the DEIS released in May. All agreed to try to complete an objective/goal prior to the release of the DEIS.**

*RFQ Responses:*

Consensus: Interview three of proposals submitted.

**Sarah will contact all three to set up initial phone interviews with the executive committee. All agreed to allow the executive committee to make the final decision. All hope to have the contract begin prior to the April 8<sup>th</sup> meeting.**

*Public Comment:*

A concern was raised about smoke impacts during controlled burns. Smoke impacts and procedures/policies followed should be described in the plans and public documents.

Legends on maps being distributed and viewed by the public need to be a lot more descriptive, with visual examples (photographs, etc.)

**Two publications were distributed during the meeting:**

Montana – Guide to the Streamside Management Zone Law & Rules 2006  
(<http://dnrc.mt.gov/forestry/Assistance/Practices/Documents/SMZ.pdf>)

Water Quality BMPs for Montana Forests

(<https://dnrc.mt.gov/Forestry/Assistance/Practices/Documents/2001WaterQualityBMPGuide.pdf>)

**Next steps:**

Next agenda items:

- RFQ outcomes
- Review Alternative 3 and updated maps, begin preparing comments & recommendations
- Discuss potential public awareness ideas, i.e. Facebook campaign, use of city website for documents, media, workshops/presentations, etc.